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BIBLICAL HISTORY

*A LECTURE DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF THE
TERM OF THE UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,
NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 19, 1889*

WITH AN APPENDIX

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BIBLICAL HISTORY.

times. He does not expect to please those who find nothing desirable outside the beaten tracks. Novelties are to them heresies. He aims rather, to stimulate those who believe that the Holy Spirit will guide into all truth, and are willing and eager to find new truth as well as old in the Word of God. That Word liveth and abideth forever. Its treasures of wisdom were not exhausted by our fathers. It has precious fruits for us also.

BIBLICAL HISTORY.

BIBLICAL HISTORY is the History contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. It is necessary to distinguish it from the History of Israel on the one hand, and from the recent theological discipline called "Contemporary History of the Old and New Testaments" on the other. I do not undervalue either of these two important branches of History when I urge that Biblical History is a separate branch. I rather aim to put these three branches of history, that deal more or less with the same themes, in their true relations.

The Contemporary History of the Old Testament aims to study the history of the nations that influenced Israel. It studies the monuments of Babylon, Egypt, Phœnicia, Assyria, and the lesser nations that encompassed Israel or were entwined with him in his development. It studies the history of Persia, Greece, and Rome,—the ancient masters of the world that held Israel in subjection.

These cast a flood of light upon the history recorded in the Bible and give us invaluable information with regard to the external influences working upon Israel and co-operating with the internal influences to produce his historical training. Great attention has been paid to this method of study in recent times, and it has in many

minds overwhelmed and absorbed the study of Biblical History itself.

Biblical History moves on its way in the narratives of the Bible, touching the great nations of the Old World at various points in its advancement, giving and receiving influences of various kinds, but pervaded with a sense of an overpowering force that has determined not only the History of Israel, but of all nations of the world. Israel has been a football of the nations, trodden under foot and tossed hither and thither by those mightier than he, but he has been a ball of light and fire that no violence could quench; for a divine blessing was in him for all mankind. God cast Israel into the fiery furnace that his dross might be consumed and the pure gold shine in its glorious lustre. The nations were his hammers, to beat him into the holy image God had designed for him from the beginning.

The earlier Isaiah warns the proud Assyrian:

"Wherefore it shall come to pass, that, when Adonay hath performed his whole work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem,

"I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria and the glory of his high looks."

"Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? Or, shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it?"

(Isaiah x. 12, 15).

And the later Isaiah encourages Israel:

"And now, thus saith Jahveh,

Thy creator, O Jacob, and thy former, O Israel,

Fear not, for I have redeemed thee.

I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine;

When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee;

And in the rivers, they shall not o'erflow thee:

When thou walkest in the fire, thou shalt not be burned,

Neither shall the flame consume thee.

For I, Jahveh, am thy God,

The Holy One of Israel is thy Saviour" (Isaiah xliii. 1-3).

The Hebrew Prophets see that Jahveh, the God of Israel, shaped all the migrations of the nations, all the movements of mankind, all the revolutions of history, for the training of His own well-beloved people.

"When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance
When he separated the children of men,
He set the bounds of the peoples,
According to the number of the children of Israel;
For Jahveh's portion is his people.
Jacob is the lot of his inheritance" (Deut. xxxii. 8-9).

And yet Israel was not for himself alone. The Biblical historians do not encourage any neglect of the other nations of the world. They represent that all are to share in the blessings of Abraham; they see them all ultimately before the judgment-seat of God; they look forward to their ultimate incorporation in the kingdom under the Messianic King. The prophet rebukes Israel for supposing that he alone was the people of God, and that all the other nations were neglected by the God of all the earth.

"Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me,
O children of Israel, saith Jahveh,
Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt,
And the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?"
(Amos ix. 7).

God watched over the other nations of the world, guided their history, and will bring them also to salvation and judgment. No one can altogether understand Biblical History until he has placed it in the light of its Contemporary History, and yet he would make a vast mistake who would suppose that this Contemporary History is the key to Biblical History. The Biblical History is the centre of this circumference of nations. It is the Sun in the midst of the world in whose rising

all mankind are to rejoice (Is. lx.). It is the light streaming forth from Biblical History that illuminates the Contemporary History. Contemporary History reflects the rays of that light. The study of the one ought not to conflict with the study of the other.

It is also necessary to distinguish Biblical History from the History of Israel. The history of Israel is a part of the history of the world. It is a section of the discipline of Universal History. It should be studied with a purely scientific interest. It uses Biblical History as one of its sources; it uses Contemporary History as another; it arranges all its material in a scientific manner, in accordance with the principles of historic development. It is on the one side more extensive than Biblical History. It fills up the numerous blanks that are left therein from other sources of information.

The period between the Old and New Testaments is of no importance to Biblical History; but it is of vast importance to the History of Israel. The historian will lay much more stress upon it than upon many earlier periods where the Biblical writers dwell at length. On the other hand the History of Israel is less extensive than Biblical History. It does not enter into the province of the supernatural, that most characteristic feature of Biblical History. It stumbles at theophanies, miracles, and prophecies. It finds it difficult to adjust these supernatural features to the principles of scientific study. The purely personal relations of Jahveh to his people are matters into which the scientific historian does not venture.

The scientific study of the History of Israel is of vast importance. No one can understand altogether the History of Israel, unless Israel's true place and importance in universal history have been determined. Each one of

the great nations of the old world has contributed its own best achievements for the weal of humanity. No one can understand the workings of God in History who does not estimate, to some extent at least, the work of Egypt and Assyria, of Phœnicia and Persia, of Greece and Rome, in the advancement of mankind. The history of the world is, as Lessing grandly shows, the divine education of our race; and every nation has its share in that instruction, and contributes its quota of experience to the successive generations. The nations of the modern world have all come into line with their interplay of forces, making the problem more complex and wonderful. The old nations of the Orient—China, India, and Japan—with Africa and the islands of the sea, share in that education and service. The world is one in origin, in training, and in destiny. There is force in Renan's remark:

"Jewish History that would have the monopoly of the miracle is not a bit more extraordinary than Greek History. If the supernatural intervention is necessary to explain the one, the supernatural intervention is also necessary to explain the other."*

I do not agree with his use of the term supernatural. But I do agree with him in the opinion that the hand of God alone can explain the history of Greece and the blessings it contained for mankind. The school of Clement of Alexandria were correct in the opinion that the philosophy of Greece was a divinely ordered preparation for the gospel, as were the law and the prophets of Israel. The Biblical historians were the first to see this fact, and to set it forth in the horizon of their narratives. They see that the God of Israel is the God seated upon the circle of the heavens, turning the hearts

* *Histoire du Peuple d'Israel*, I., p. v.

of kings and nations; they know that the Messiah of Israel is the universal King; they see all the forces of history converging toward His universal sway. It is a Hebrew poet who describes the New Jerusalem as the city of the regeneration of the nations:

"Glorious things are being spoken in thee, city of God!
 I mention Rahab and Babel as belonging to those who know
 me;
 Lo, Philistia and Tyre with Cush: 'This one was born there,'
 And as belonging to Zion, it is said,—'This one and that one
 were born in her,'
 And Elyon, Jahveh—he establisheth her,
 He counteth in writing up the peoples,—'This one was born
 there,'
 Yea, they are singing as well as dancing, all those who dwell
 in thee."*

We do not by any means undervalue the scientific study of the History of Israel and the origins of Christianity. We do not depreciate the importance of the Contemporary History of the Old and the New Testaments, when we insist that Biblical History has its own place and importance as the lamp of the nations and the key for the development of mankind.†

Biblical History is confined to the history recorded in the canonical writings of the Scriptures. Here is a group of sacred histories that are of unique importance. They cover a wide range in time, an immense mass of detail; they were written by different writers, in three different languages, and yet they have common features that distinguish them from all other histories, and entitle them to be bound together in one book as Biblical History.

This history extends over a vast period of time: it be-

* Ps. lxxxvii. See Briggs' *Messianic Prophecy*, p. 227.

† See Appendix I.

gins with the creation of the world, it closes with the erection of the banner of the Messiah in Rome, the capital of the world. It is narrower in its geographical range. Its centre is Palestine, a little land that has always been and always must be, for geographical reasons, the centre of the world. But it radiates from this centre into all the territories of the great nations of the Old World. It deals with a little nation and very often with single persons, but that nation was the people of God, the bearer of the greatest religions of the world, Judaism and Christianity, which have determined the entire development of mankind; and these individuals were the prophets of God: Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, Solomon, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezra—names that outshine the brightest stars of other nations in moral worth, and all of whom point, as watchers of the night, to the dawn of the sun of the world, Jesus Christ, the greatest of men, the Son of God, and Saviour of man. Such a history that discloses to us the religious heroes of mankind, the banner-bearers of God; and that culminates in the glories of God manifest in the flesh, has a unique place and importance in the development of the world.

Biblical History is wonderful in its variety. Four different types of writers give us four different points of view, of the most important and fundamental characters and events. There are four Gospels, that combine to give us a comprehensive view of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Any one of them is easily worth all other books written by men. We have also four narratives of the establishment of the Old Covenant.

Higher Criticism has traced these four narratives in the Hexateuch, and has for the most part separated them so that we can place them in parallelism, just as we do

the gospels in our Harmonies. A postexilic editor compacted them together, just as Tatian did the gospels in the second Christian century.* Dogmatists and Traditionalists have gone on "snorting" against the Higher Criticism since the days of Eichhorn, its father—but they have long since been silenced on the Continent of Europe; they speak with timidity in Great Britain. It is only in ultra-conservative America that they still go on battling for traditional theories and clamoring against the truth of God.† Any one can see that four gospels are better than one; four narratives of the story of the founding of the Old Covenant are also better than one. Even if we have to give up the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, we gain four writers in the place of Moses; and the history of Moses and the establishment of his covenant, gains vastly in strength by the testimony of four witnesses instead of one.

In the history of the kingdom from its establishment to the exile, we have two parallel narratives in the books of Samuel and Kings on the one hand, and the Chronicler on the other; but Higher Criticism finds in the narratives of Samuel and Kings three original writers, similar to three of the writers of the Hexateuch.

These four kinds of writers of Biblical History that we find in the Old Testament, as well as in the New, are not without significance, for they correspond with four types that run through the entire literature of the Bible. James, Peter, Paul, and John represent four different points of view in the New Testament epistles. Each of these types has its corresponding gospel. In the Old Testament we distinguish the writers of the wisdom literature from the writers of the lyric poetry,

* See Appendix II.

† See Appendix III.

and both of these from the prophetic and the priestly writers. Are not these the same types that we find in the New Testament, and ought we not to expect to find these same types, that are in the New Testament, represented in the older histories? These are not fanciful combinations of theorists and speculators, but are the interesting product of the scientific study of the Bible itself. When we compare these four types of Biblical writers with the results of the scientific study of other religions and races, we find that they correspond with the four great temperaments of mankind, and the four great types of character that reappear throughout human history.

It is one of the wonderful results of the Higher Criticism of the Bible that all the important events and doctrines rest upon a fourfold foundation, and a comprehension of the four great ways of looking at things that are possible to the human mind. There is danger in our study of the Bible on this very account. Few minds are sufficiently comprehensive to grasp the entire representation of these Biblical writers. Each man will naturally look at any subject through the eyes and the representations of the author of kindred temperament and type. The analysis of the Hexateuch has brought to light a large number of apparent inconsistencies. This was what ought to have been expected. They are no more, however, than those that still trouble scholars in the Harmony of the Gospels after all these centuries of study. On the other hand, many old difficulties have been removed. Many statements that were inconsistent and even contradictory in the same author, are complementary and supplementary in different authors; and so we gain a higher unity of representations, which is all the grander for the fourfold variety out of which it

springs. The history has not the unity of a straight line, a series of points, but the unity of a cube—the unity such as we see in the cubical structure of the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle, and the temple. The new Jerusalem of the Apocalypse is four-square. The army of the living God marches in four solid divisions. The cherubic chariot of its King faces the four quarters of the earth. The four cherubic faces represent not only the four gospels, but also the four types that are in the epistles of the New Testament, and the histories and writings of the Old Testament.

Biblical History has certain features that distinguish it from all other history. The most important of these is the *theophanic presence of God*.

There are some who would point to miracles and prophecy as the great supernatural features of the Bible, that prove its uniqueness and its divine origin. But any intelligent person will admit that it is just these supernatural features of miracles and prophecies that, in our day, constitute the chief obstacles to faith in the Bible for scientific and literary scholars. Biblical History is not unique in this regard. The ancient histories of other nations claim miracles and divine prophecy for the leaders of their religion. The scientific historian is tempted to treat the miracles and prophecies of Biblical History in the same way in which he treats them in the history of Egypt, Assyria, Greece, and the Roman Church. He is bound so to do, unless something of a distinguishing character is found in these supernatural features of the Bible. It also is noteworthy that Moses and Jesus recognize the supernatural in miracle-working and prophecy beyond the range of prophetic-working and outside the kingdom of God. There must be something in the character of the supernatural in Biblical History that

will vindicate its reality and power, or it cannot be saved from the tomb into which modern Historical Criticism has cast the supernatural in all other history.

It has long been clear to me that the Bible does not magnify the supernatural in miracle-working and prophecy to the same extent as is common in modern treatises on the evidences of Christianity and Apologetics.

It is my opinion that undue stress upon these things has called attention away from still more important features in Biblical History. The miracles of Biblical History were not wrought in order to give modern divines evidences of the truth and reality of the Biblical religion. The prophets did not aim to give apologists proofs for the inspiration of the Scriptures. The miracles were wrought as acts of divine judgment and redemption. Prophecy was given to instruct men in the religion of God, in order to their salvation and moral growth. The miracles were not designed to show that God was able to violate the laws of nature, to overrule or suspend them at His will. The miracles of the Bible rather show that God Himself was present in Nature, directing His own laws in deeds of redemption, and of judgment. The miracles are divine acts in nature. Prophecy was not designed to show that God can overrule the laws of the human mind, suspend them, or act instead of them, using man as a mere speaking-tube to convey heavenly messages to this world. Prophecy rather discloses the presence of God in man, stimulating him to use all the powers of his intellectual and moral nature in the instruction of the people of God. Miracles and prophecy in Biblical History are the signs of the presence of God in that History. He has not left that History to itself. He has not left the laws of nature and of mind to their

ordinary development, but He has taken His place at the head of affairs as the monarch of nature and the king of men to give His personal presence and superintendence to a history which is central and dominant of the history of the world.

Now this is the conception of the supernatural, that we find in Biblical History. Miracles were chiefly at the Exodus from Egypt, and the entrance into Palestine. Here they are associated with the theophanic presence of God. They reappear in the age of Elijah and Elisha, a period marked by theophanies. Then again they were wrought by Jesus, the God-man, and by His apostles, in connection with theophanies of the divine Spirit. The Theophany, the Christophany, and the Pneumatophany are the sources of the miracles of the Bible. When God is really present in Nature, in the forms of time and space and circumstance, then miracles are the most natural things in the world.*

The Prophecy of the Old Testament also springs from theophanies. The great master-spirits of prophecy were called by theophanies. The apostles were commissioned by Christophanies and Pneumatophanies. God entered into the human mind, into its perception, conception, and imagination, and guided these to give utterance to the wonderful things of God.† I do not presume to say that every miracle and every prophetic discourse may be traced directly to theophanic influence, yet I do venture to say that the most of them can be traced to such origination, and that the others may likewise be referred to a more secret divine presence in nature and in man, even if that presence was not always disclosed in some external manner.

* See Appendix IV.

† See Appendix V.

It is necessary, however, to go much farther, in order to realize the importance of the theophany in Biblical History. It is the representation of the Patriarchal History that God was constantly manifesting Himself to the antediluvians and patriarchs in various theophanic forms, to guide them in all the important affairs of their lives. The four narratives of the Exodus tell us that God assumed the form of an angel and then of a pillar of cloud and fire, and remained with His people in a permanent form of theophany from the Exodus from Egypt until the entrance in the Holy Land. God's theophanic presence remained with His people until the exile. The ark was His throne, the tabernacle His abode, the temple His palace. The sacred writers of the Old Testament knew that God was reigning in Jerusalem as the real King of Israel and the nations, by personal theophanic presence.

The theophanic presence was withdrawn from the nation during the exile and only granted to a few prophets; but on the return to Canaan, God again appeared in wondrous theophanies. These are not recorded in the cold, dry narrative of the chronicler, but they appear in the psalms and prophets of the period. The theophanic presence of God was not granted to the second temple. God withdrew Himself from His people for several centuries in order to prepare mankind for the grandest of all theophanies—the *Incarnation* of the Son of God. The Incarnation was God manifest in the flesh, an abiding presence of God, no longer in the Holy of Holies, but in familiar intercourse with men until His death on the cross and ascension to the heavenly throne. Then a few days of divine absence, and the theophany of the divine Spirit came at Pentecost.

Pneumatophany and Christophany now abound in the

period of planting the Church in the world. The last is the wonderful one in Patmos. And here Biblical History comes to an end, with a prophetic picture of the final scenes of all history. From this survey, it is clear that the most distinguishing feature of Biblical History is the *theophanic presence of God*. The narratives of the Biblical writers treat of the times of that presence. When the theophany is absent, the Biblical narrative is absent also. When the theophany is absent, the Biblical historian sees nothing to narrate; his Lord is not there. History is to him a blank. When the theophany is withdrawn and the enthroned Saviour governs His kingdom without theophanic manifestations, Biblical History passes over into Church History. From this point of view, Biblical History is the *History of the theophanic presence of God in His kingdom of grace*.

This central feature of Biblical History determines all others.

The theocratic historian begins his narrative with the story of theophanic manifestations to the patriarchs, taking a special interest in Israel, the father of the nation. This writer is graphic, plastic, and realistic. God appears in dreams: He comes in forms of man and angel. He lets Himself be seen and touched. He even condescends to wrestle with Jacob. He appears to Moses in the burning bush as the angel of the presence. He assumes human form and lets Moses see Him and commune with Him in His tent. He manifests Himself to the elders of Israel, enthroned on a glorious throne, and lets them eat the covenant sacrifice in His presence. God is to this narrator ever present to guide the nation as their King.

“Thy right hand, Jahveh, is glorious in power,
Thy right hand, Jahveh, dasheth in pieces the enemy.

Thou sendest forth thy wrath, it consumeth them as stubble,
And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were piled up,
The floods stood upright as an heap,
The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea.
Thou, in thy mercy, hast led the people which thou dost redeem,

Thou hast guided them in thy strength to thy holy habitation.
Jahveh reigns forever and ever." (Ex. xv. 6-19).

The same spirit guides the theocratic narrator who tells the story of the later history. He is very zealous for his own God, and scorns the gods of the nations. Elijah condenses this feeling in his bitter irony to the prophets of Baal:

"Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is musing or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked." (1 Kings xviii. 27).

The calm, serene confidence of the prophet is justified by the theophanic interposition and the cry of the people:

"Jahveh, He is God! Jahveh, He is God!" (1 Kings xviii. 39).

The gospel of Mark writes in a similar spirit in the New Testament. Mark has no interest in introductory matters or even results. He is absorbed in the Christ of history, in His life and deeds. His plastic style gives us Jesus as He manifested Himself. He tells his story in such a realistic and powerful manner that we bow before the Christ as the King of nature and of men, without waiting for solicitation or argument.

Other histories give us evidences of the presence and power of God. Mythological conceptions lie at the basis of the histories of other ancient nations. There the gods descend to earth and clothe themselves in forms of nature and man; but they thereby assume the parts and passions of man and share in all his weaknesses, sins, and

corruptions; or they become merely forces and forms of physical nature. But the theophanies of these Biblical historians never confound God with man, with angels, or with nature; and the form assumed is merely for manifestation to holy men; and it is a thin veil through which as much of the glory of deity shines as the holy man or prophet was able to bear. And whereas these mythological conceptions are only at the mythical roots of other ancient Histories; the theophanies pervade and control Biblical History from the beginning to the end. There is no other history in which God is manifest in such a simple, natural, and yet kingly way, where men see Him, know Him, and obey Him as their own Prince and King.

The prophetic historian begins his story with an epic poem, disclosing, on the one side, the origin and development of human sin and the divine wrath, and on the other the grace of God in the progress of redemption. The great theme of his history is redemption from sin. He and other Biblical historians of the same type, give us the *development of the Kingdom of Redemption*. The great Hebrew epic that constitutes the preface of this history is the most wonderful of stories.* The history of mankind begins with Adam, sculptured by the hands of God and quickened by the breath of God. He is placed in a paradise planted by the hands of God, and has charge of animals formed, like himself, by the hands of God. He receives his wife from the hands of God, built out of a portion of his own body. He is trained in conception and speech by the voice of God. All things in him and about him exhibit the marks of God's personal presence and contact; and yet Adam sinned

* See Appendix VI.

against his creator and benefactor, and brought an entail of woe upon our race. The epic describes, in a series of pictures, the successive catastrophes of mankind, the Fall, the Fratricide, the Deluge, and the Dispersion, events that lie at the foundations of human history. Faint reflections of these events are found in the legends and myths of other ancient nations, but nowhere do we see such a beautiful, simple, touching, and profound story. It is an artist's masterpiece, whether we regard it as prose or poetry, whether it be legend or narrative. I think that it is poetry in form as well as substance—an epic poem of the highest order. Here the imagination and fancy are supreme, and yet there is nothing of those grotesque mythological forms, and those extravagant legendary scenes that constitute the staple of all efforts to depict the origin of things among other ancient nations. The poem is so simple, so chaste, so realistic, so artless, that it has been mistaken by most students for prose. Such poetry must have been inspired by a divine art; such imagination and fancy must have been inflamed and at the same time tempered and subdued by a divine breath.

The poem describes the origin and development of sin in the family of Adam, in the descendants of Cain, in the human race, in the family of Noah, in the builders of Babel. The wrath of God comes upon sin in several catastrophes of judgment. But redemption is never absent. The promise to the woman's seed opens up the path of Messianic prophecy, which the prophet traces in its stages of divine revelation, so that human sin is overwhelmed and destroyed in the progress of redemption. Sin and Redemption are the master words of his entire history. We see them unfolding in the patriarchal story, in the exodus, and the wanderings,

and the conquest. Jahveh, the personal God and Saviour, is ever with His people to guide and to bless. This prophet is the brightest and best narrator in the Bible. His stories never tire us, for they ever touch the secret springs of our heart's emotions.

A writer of a similar spirit tells the story of David, of his sins and sorrows and restoration, and traces the history of the kingdom of redemption in his seed until the Exile.

Matthew is an evangelist of a similar spirit—the favorite among the gospels. He is the evangelist of the Messianic promise, of the kingdom of redemption, and of the conflict of sin and grace.

The history of sin and of redemption in these Biblical historians is unique. Sin, indeed, is everywhere in the world. Other histories cover it over. These histories expose it. And yet Israel was not the greatest sinner among the nations. If his sins are more patent, are more in the light of history, it is because he has ever been a penitent sinner. Deceitful Abraham, crafty Jacob, choleric Moses, wilful Saul, passionate David, voluptuous Solomon, hasty Peter, doubting Thomas, heresy-hunting Paul—these are not the chief of sinners. Their counterparts are to be found in all ages and all over the world. We see them every day in our streets. They are not distinguished above other men as sinners; but they are distinguished as repenting sinners, the discoverers of the divine forgiveness of sin, the banner-bearers of redemption, the trophies of divine grace. No other history but Biblical History gives us such a history of redemption, an unfolding of the grace of God, from the first promise of the ancient epic, through all the intricate variety of Messianic prophecy and fulfilment, until we see the Redeemer ascend to heaven, the son of woman,

the second Adam, the serpent-bruise, victor over sin and death, to reign on a throne of grace as the world's Redeemer.

The fifth book of the Hexateuch is called Deuteronomy, on the ancient theory that it was a repetition of the law. Its legislation is represented in the narratives of the book of Kings, rather, as the Instruction or the Covenant. This legislation is embedded in narratives that assume the oratorical form. They have a character of their own; they are of a distinct type from the narratives thus far considered. The same writer is chiefly responsible for the history of the Conquest. A writer of the same type has touched up the history of the Kings. This writer has the conception of the Fatherhood of God, and from this point of view he estimates the history of God's people. The whole history is a discipline, a training of the child Israel by his father God. The love of the Father and His tender compassion are grandly conceived, and the sin of the nation is a violation of the parental relation. The ideal life of God's people is a life of love to the heavenly Father. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by the word that issues from the mouth of God. The divine instruction, the holy guidance is what the child needs for life, growth, and prosperity. All blessedness is summed up in loving God and serving Him with the whole heart. All curses will come upon those who forsake Him and refuse His instruction and guidance. God is Judge as well as Father, and this discipline is to end in an ultimate judgment that will award the blessings and curses that have been earned. The Deuteronomist judges the whole history of Israel from this point of view, and regards it as determined by the disciplining love of God.

The Gospel of John is of the same type, in the New

Testament. It is the gospel of light, and life, and love. The love of God, displayed throughout Biblical History, reaches its climax in that love which gave the only begotten Son for the salvation of the world. The life that was in the words of the Old Covenant was intensified in the words of Jesus, which are spirit and life; it entered the world and dwelt among us as the Incarnate Word, the light of the world, and the true life for mankind. The Biblical History is thus a history of the fatherly love of God. We shall not deny that other histories display the love of God, and that all mankind share in the heavenly discipline. But it was left for the Biblical histories to discern that love, and to describe it as the quickening breath of History.

The priestly historian takes the most comprehensive view of Biblical History. He begins with an ancient poem describing the creation of the world. This stately lyric, in six pentameter strophes, paints the wondrous drama of the six days' work in which the Sovereign of the universe, by word of command, summons His host into being, and out of primitive chaos organizes a beautiful and orderly whole. The sovereignty of God and the supremacy of law and order are the most striking features of this story of creation.*

I doubt if there is any other passage of the Bible that has attracted such universal attention and been the centre of such world-wide contest from the earliest times. Here Biblical History comes into contact with Physical Science in all its sections, with Philosophy, with the history of ancient nations, as well as with theology. I shall not attempt to discuss the numberless questions that spring into our minds in connection with the first chapter of Genesis. I will only remark that if one takes it

* See Appendix VII.

as a lyric poem, and interprets it in the same way as we are accustomed to interpret the psalms of creation and the poetic descriptions of the creation in Hebrew Prophecy and Hebrew Wisdom, the most of the difficulties will pass away; and the greater part of the contest with Science, Philosophy, and Archæology will cease.

It is plain to me that the poem does not teach creation out of nothing, but its scope is to describe the bringing of beauty and order and organism out of primitive chaos. It is clear to me that the poem makes the word and spirit of God the agents of creation, and these are just as suitable to the conception of development in six stages as to the conception of an indefinite number of distinct originations out of nothing.

I am not troubled with the order of creation, for the poet is giving us six scenes in the Act of Creation, six pictures of the general order of the development of nature. I think it is not necessary to suppose that there was a wide gap between these pictures, and that there is no overlapping. When God said, "Let light come into being," He did not continue saying these words for twenty-four hours, or a century or more. Divine speech is instantaneous. The *effect* of His saying may go on forever, but His word is a flash of light. I think that God did no more speaking on the second day than on the first, no more on the sixth than on the third. The poet certainly does not tell us that God spake a creative word for every object of creation, or even for every species or genus. He, who in His divine conception is above the limits of time and space and circumstance, who grasps in one conception the whole frame of universal nature, with one word, or one breath, or a thought, might have called the universe into being. The poem of the Creation conceives God as speaking six creative

words, in order thus to paint the six pictures of creation in an orderly manner. The poet does not propose to comprehend in his representation all the forces and forms and methods of the work of God.

Take it as it is, it is a lyric poem of wonderful power and beauty. Science has not yet reached a point when it can tell the story of creation so well. The story of creation is set forth in the legends and myths of many nations. The Babylonian poem gives us the best ethnic representation. But all these ethnic conceptions are discolored by mythological fancies and grotesque speculations. Compared with the best of them, the Biblical Poem is pure and simple and grand. A divine touch is in its sketchings. A divine spirit hovered over the mind of the poet to bring order and beauty out of his crude and tossing speculations, no less than He did over the primitive chaos of the world itself.

The priestly historian gives another ancient Poem of the Deluge, which also is marked by the same general characteristics of the sovereignty of God and the supremacy of law, that we have seen in the poem of the Creation. He connects these and his other histories by a well-arranged table of genealogies, giving us the line of mankind from Adam through the centuries of the holy race. He conceives of God as a *holy God*, and of man as created in *the image of the holy God, with sovereignty over the earth*. It is sin against the divine majesty that involves the catastrophe of the deluge. This historian traces the history of Israel in a series of divine covenants with Noah, Abraham, Jacob, and Moses. These involve the government of God and the service of a holy people. The constitution of a holy law and holy institutions is his highest delight. God's people must be a holy people, as God their Lord is holy, and

all their approaches to Him must be in well-ordered forms of sanctity. The entire history of the Exodus and the conquest is conceived from this point of view.

The chronicler is an author of kindred spirit. He describes the history of the kingdom until the exile, and judges of it from the point of view of the holy law of God. He also gives us an account of the Restoration and establishment of the holy people in the holy land, under the priestly rule and the holy law. And here he brings his history to an end.

A writer of similar spirit in the New Testament is Luke. He also begins his genealogy with Adam. He also gives a later unfolding of the history in the story of the planting of Christianity among Jews and Gentiles. He also has a profound sense of the sovereignty of God, the work of the divine Spirit, and the ideal of holiness.

When now we compare these Biblical historians with other ancient historians, we observe that the Egyptians come nearest to the Hebrews in their conception of sanctity, but the Hebrews transcend them in making holiness the norm of History. The ideal of the image of the Holy God in man, is the ideal that these Biblical writers held in mind, as the goal of history. Whence could they have derived this ideal if not from the mind of God?

I shall not attempt to enter into any details in exposition of the History contained in the Bible. It is sufficient to say that the History is determined in its divisions by its great principles. The History is divided into two parts, not only by the blank of several hundred years that separates the Old Testament History from the New Testament; but still more, by the fact that the history of the Old Testament is guided by Theophanies, the his-

tory of the New Testament by Christophanies, and it is just the unfolding of these Theophanies and Christophanies that marks the subordinate periods.

You have doubtless noted that I have had nothing to say about inspiration, and that I have taken little account of some things that are usually magnified by those who are over-anxious about the evidences of our religion, and seem to consider a system of Apologetics the chief end of the Bible and Theology. I have called your attention to other things that seem to me of much greater importance. I have shown you the great principles of Biblical History as they appear in the Biblical historians. We have seen that the Presence of God in nature and man is the greatest feature of Biblical History, and that this presence is sometimes conceived as a royal personal presence, as friend and guide, sometimes as the Saviour guiding the history of redemption, sometimes as the Father disciplining His people in love, and sometimes as a holy God governing His people with a holy law in view of an ideal of holiness. These principles are the dominant principles of Biblical History. These attributes of Biblical History distinguish it from all other History. The Biblical writers have a divine way of historical composition. They bring God near to us, encompass us with heavenly influence, and make us sensible of the touch of God. If this is not Inspiration it is fully as good as Inspiration. It is better than many conceptions of Inspiration. It assures us that the books are books of God, the words of life and redemption. If such features and attributes do not convince men of the divine authority of the Scriptures, I doubt whether you can convince them in any other way.*

* See Appendix VIII.

Biblical History lies in the midst of Ancient History as its centre of light and life. Biblical History lies at the basis of Church History as its root and spring. Once a grain of mustard-seed in Palestine, the people of God have produced a wondrous plant in Christendom. Planted as a cedar twig on the mountains of Israel, they have become a giant of Lebanon, overshadowing the earth (Matth. xiii. 31, 32; Ezek. xvii. 22-24). A long blank of eighteen centuries lies between us and the History recorded in the Bible, and yet that History still remains a well-spring of life to mankind. A blank of several centuries separated the Old Testament theophanies from the Incarnation of the Son of God. They were centuries of preparation for the first Advent. So these eighteen centuries of Christianity are centuries of preparation for the second advent of Jesus Christ; an advent that will transcend all theophanies, and be the culmination of all Christophanies. For this, Millenniums of preparation may well be necessary. But then we may anticipate that Biblical History will once more be told by holy men of God, who will be stirred to narrate those transcendent events in which the kingdom of grace will reach its fruition. Themes worthy of holy penmen will again appear, when Prophecy shall be transformed into History in the Advent of our Lord. Sacred historians will tell the story for eternity, of that last combat with evil, the resurrection of the dead, the day of doom, the New Jerusalem, the New Heaven and the New Earth, and the Messiah's presentation of the kingdom of the redeemed in all its sanctity and glory, as His own best gift of love to the Father.

APPENDIX.

I.

THE PLACE OF BIBLICAL HISTORY IN THEOLOGICAL ENCYCLOPÆDIA.

HAGENBACH* treats Biblical History as a section of Historical Theology, dividing it into the History of the People of Israel, the Contemporary History of the New Testament, the Life of Jesus, and the Life of the Apostles and Founding of the Church. He regards Biblical History as the transition from Exegetical to Historical Theology. On the other hand, he makes Biblical Archæology, including Biblical Geography and Natural History, a section of Exegetical Theology.† This distribution of the material seems to be unfortunate and without sufficient reasons. The line separating Exegetical Theology from Historical Theology is not a line that divides between History and Exegesis. On this theory Exegetical Theology has to do with the exegesis of the sources of Biblical History and Theology; the results of that exegesis in History and Theology going to the Historical department. To carry out such a distinction, we would have to distinguish between the exegesis of the sources of Church History and Church History itself. Christian Archæology, Patristics, Diplomatics, and the like would come under the head of Exegetical Theology. Exegetical Theology is really a section of Historical Theology, as most recent writers on Encyclopædia have shown. The chief reasons for making

* *Encyklopädie*, 11th Aufl., 1884, p. 219, *seq.*

† *I. c.*, p. 149, *seq.*

Exegetical Theology a separate division are: (1) its essential material is derived from divine revelation; and (2) the department is so vast that it demands separate treatment. A more logical division would be to take Historical Theology as a general term, embracing (1) Exegetical Theology—the Theology of the Old and New Testaments; (2) Ethnic Theology—the Theology of the other religions of the world; and (3) Christian Theology—the Historical Theology of the Christian Church.

Principal Cave* has recently made a similar arrangement of material, only making six divisions. He includes Biblical History under his third division, which he terms Biblical Theology; and Church History under his fourth division, which he names Ecclesiastical Theology.

Exegetical Theology should include Biblical History, Biblical Theology, Biblical Archæology, Biblical Geography, and Biblical Chronology as well as Biblical Exegesis and Biblical Literature—just as Historical Theology should include Patristics, Monumental Theology, Diplomatics, and Christian Epigraphy.

Biblical History will include Archæology, Geography, and Chronology. It is limited, however, to the Biblical sources, and therefore must be distinguished from the History of Israel, which is a part of Universal History, and the Contemporary History, which looks at the Biblical History from the point of view of the surrounding nations.

The older writers on Biblical History treated it in a devotional or homiletical interest. In more recent times Biblical History has been neglected, while scholars have devoted themselves to the History of Israel and the Contemporary History.

II.

THE ANALYSIS OF THE HEXATEUCH.

“The analysis of the Pentateuch into four distinct narratives, with their distinct codes of legislation, is the result of a century of study by the most famous critics of the age. There are slight

* *An Introduction to Theology*, Edin., T. & T. Clark; N. Y., Scribner, Welford & Co.

differences of opinion in the analysis at some points, but these are chiefly at the seams which bind the narratives together, and are due to the editor's work, who, in his efforts to make the entire composition as harmonious and symmetrical as possible, sometimes obscured the signs of difference. But the concord of critics in the work of analysis as a whole is wonderful, in view of the difficulties that beset the work of higher criticism. The few objectors among Hebrew scholars display their own unfamiliarity with the practical work of criticism, when they overlook these solid results and point to the difficulties as evidences that the problem has not been solved. The differences of opinion among practical critics and the difficulties in the analysis are where they ought to be from the very nature of the case. Instead of improving the work of criticism, they are, therefore, an indirect evidence of its correctness. The differences and difficulties disappear one after the other as the investigation advances. The evidences for the analysis into four narratives are: (1) Differences in use of words and phrases; (2) differences in style and methods of composition; (3) differences in point of view and representations of religious institutions, doctrines, and morals. We have given this latter subject a thorough investigation. We have by careful induction gathered the theology of each of the documents by itself and then compared them, and have found such a thorough-going difference that it is simply impossible that they should have come from the same original author. We hope at some future time to present the theology of the Pentateuch to the public. In the meanwhile we refer to Dillmann, *Genesis*, 4th Aufl., 1882; Keuss, *Gesch. der Heiligen Schriften*, A. T. 1881; Kuenen, *Hist. crit. Onderzoek*, i., 1885; Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs*, in his *Skizzen u. Vorarbeiten*, ii., 1885; also my 'Critical Study of the History of the Higher Criticism,' *Presbyterian Review*, 1883, p. 69, *seq.*

"Scholars are not agreed in the names they give to the four documents. The priestly narrator is the Q. of Wellhausen, the A. or first Elohist of Dillmann. The prophetic narrator is the Jahvist. The theocratic narrator is the second Elohist. The Deuteronomist is agreed to by all." (Extract from Briggs' *Messianic Prophecy*, pp. 67-68, Charles Scribner's Sons.)

III.

EICHHORN'S VIEW OF THE OPPONENTS OF THE HIGHER CRITICISM.

"Eichhorn separates the Elohist and Jehovistic documents in Genesis with great pains, and with such success that his analysis has been the basis of all critical investigation since his day. Its great advantages are admirably stated :

" ' For this discovery of the internal condition of the first books of Moses, party spirit will, perhaps, for a pair of decennials, snort at the Higher Criticism, instead of rewarding it with the full thanks that are due it, for (1), the credibility of the book gains by such a use of more ancient documents; (2) the harmony of the two narratives, at the same time with their slight deviations, proves their independence and mutual reliability; (3) interpreters will be relieved of difficulty by this Higher Criticism, which separates document from document; (4) finally, the gain of Criticism is also great. If the Higher Criticism has now for the first distinguished author from author, and in general characterized each according to his own ways, diction, favorite expressions, and other peculiarities, then her lower sister, who busies herself only with words and spies out false readings, has rules and principles by which she must test particular readings.' *"

"Eichhorn carried his methods of higher criticism into the entire Old Testament with the hand of a master, and laid the foundation of views that have been maintained ever since with increasing determination. He did not always grasp the truth, He sometimes chased shadows and framed visionary theories, both in relation to the Old and New Testaments, like others who have preceded him and followed him. He could not transcend the limits of his age and adapt himself to future discoveries. The labors of a large number of scholars and the work of a century and more were still needed, as Eichhorn modestly anticipated." (Extract from Briggs' *Biblical Study*, 3d edition, Charles Scribner's Sons, pp. 205, 206.)

* Eichhorn's *Einleitung ins Alt Test.*, 1780, ii., p. 329.

The analysis of the Hexateuch into four writings, is an achievement of the Higher Criticism that has won the consent of the vast majority of professional students of the Old Testament throughout the world. I doubt whether there is any subject of importance in which professional scholars are so well agreed. The Biblical scholarship of the continent of Europe may be said to be unanimous on this subject. The Professors of Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh are united in their support of the four documents. There is not an Old Testament Professor of standing in Great Britain who takes any other view, except the venerable Principal Douglas, of Glasgow. The majority of Old Testament Professors in America are of the same opinion. The notable exceptions are: Professors W. H. Green, Howard Osgood, and E. C. Bissell. These do not oppose the Higher Criticism as such. No Biblical scholar could do that. They differ from other critics in that they advocate the traditional theory of the Pentateuch. They use the tools of criticism, so far as possible, as apologists. It is hardly likely that they will long be able to resist the Biblical Scholarship of the rest of the world. The Higher Criticism has separated the four documents. There is agreement here. The discord is as to the date of the documents. I am not prepared to take a definite position on that subject. So far as the contest between Professors Green, Osgood, and Bissell, and the critics opposed to them, is concerned, it is a scholarly contest between critics who adhere to the traditional theory, and critics who have abandoned the traditional theory for the results of a more scientific study of the Scriptures. The only difficulty in the situation is that some ministers and editors, who are not critics and who are ignorant of the history and terminology of criticism, endeavor to excite the public mind against Higher Criticism by appeals to prejudice and brutal methods. Our Saviour represents such enemies of the truth as hissing serpents (Matth. xxiii. 33); Paul writes of them as dogs (Phil. iii. 2). It is in accordance with such precedents that Eichhorn uses the term *snort*. This term has been regarded by Biblical scholars for a century as a graphic description of a kind of opposition they have had to contend with.

IV.

MIRACLES AND THEOPHANIES.

"There can be no doubt that recent criticisms have considerably weakened the evidences from miracles and predictive prophecy. To many minds it would be easier to believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures and the divinity of Jesus Christ, if there were no such things as Miracles and Prediction in the sacred Scriptures. The older apologetic made too much of the external marvels of miracle-working, and sought to find in history the fulfilment of the minute details of prediction. But it has been found easier to prove the divinity of Christ without miracles. Belief in miracles needs to be sustained by faith in Jesus Christ. It is necessary to prove the inspiration of the Scriptures as the product of the spirit of prophecy, before we can advance with profit into the special field of prediction. Even the Scriptures themselves recognize miracle-working and prediction in false prophets, and teach us to distinguish the true miracle and the true prediction from the false by their internal character and their conformity to truth and fact. Recent criticisms have brought these lines of evidences into better accord with the representations of the Bible itself.

"The Old Testament is full of Theophanies; and in the New Testament there are many Christophanies and Pneumatophanies. These manifestations of God in the forms of space and time and in the sphere of physical nature, are of vast importance in the unfolding of divine revelation. These are the centres from which miracles and prophecies flow. If there were such theophanies or divine manifestations in the successive stages of divine revelation, then we should expect miracles in the physical world and prophecy in the world of man. If Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh, then prophecy and miracles are exactly what we should expect so long as He abode in this world in the flesh. If the Holy Spirit was given to the apostles on the day of Pentecost, and He was present with the churches of the apostles in the peculiar manner of external manifestations of pneumatophany such as are described in the New Testament, we are not surprised

at the occurrence of miracle-working and prophecy during that period; and it seems to be the most natural thing in the world that, when these divine manifestations ceased, miracle-working and prophecy ceased with them. If, then, on the one side, recent criticisms have weakened the independent value of the evidences from miracles and prediction, they have, on the other side, given something vastly better in their place. They have called the attention to the presence of God with His people in external manifestations of theophany, to guide the advancing stages of the history of redemption. Here is the citadel of our religion, to which all its lines of evidence converge, the centre of the entire revelation and religion from which prophecy and miracle-working issue in all their variety of form. The evidences from miracles and prophecy gain in strength when they are placed in their true relations to the theophany in which the unity of the evidence is found." (Extract from Briggs' *Whither?* 1889, Charles Scribner's Sons, pp. 279-280.)

V.

PROPHECY AND THEOPHANY.

"The Hebrew religion is a religion of union and communion with God, a living, growing, everlasting religion. The Hebrew prophets present us with an immortal religion. They derive it by direct communication with the ever-living God. It is the theophanic manifestation of God in the forms of time and space and sphere of physical nature, to call and endow the master spirits of Hebrew prophecy, that constitute one of its most distinctive features. Hebrew prophecy, as Hebrew miracle-working, springs from theophanies. These were the sources of every new advance. They constitute a series leading on to the incarnation as their culmination. They were the divine seals to the roll of Hebrew prophecy, sealing every new page with an objective divine verification and authentication. They bind the prophets into an organic whole. They come in the great crisis of the development of prophecy, and shed their glorious light over the prophecies that precede and those that follow. We have not only

therefore the calling and endowment of particular prophets by these theophanies, but the calling and endowment of prophetic chiefs to originate and perpetuate a succession of prophets with an organic system of prophecy.

"We do not find these theophanies in connection with every prophet, but only with the greatest prophets, the reformers of their age. It is possible that other prophets were also called by theophanies which they have not described to us. But this is improbable. It was, indeed, unnecessary. Theophanies are to initiate religious movements and mark the stages of their development, but are not the constant feature of prophecy. Ordinarily Hebrew prophecy comes from prophets who have the internal subjective assurance of the truth of God and their commission to declare it. But in all cases of objective, as well as subjective assurance, the prophet's powers are taxed to the utmost to give expression, in the human forms of his own nature and surroundings, to the divine ideas that have taken possession of him." (Extract from Briggs' *Messianic Prophecy*, Charles Scribner's Sons, pp. 20-21.)

VI.

THE EPIC OF THE FALL OF MAN.

"The earlier chapters of Genesis contain a series of brief, simple, and charming stories of the origin and early history of mankind, that bear the traces of great antiquity. They were doubtless handed down for many generations as unwritten tradition ere they were committed to writing by the sacred writers. They passed through a series of editions, until at last they were compacted in that unique collection of inspired Scripture which we call the book of Genesis. The literary beauties of these stories have been recognized since Herder, by those who have studied the Scriptures with their æsthetic taste. Poetic features have been noticed by a number of scholars, but, so far as we know, no one has previously observed that they are a series of real poems. It was the good fortune of the author to make this discovery. Annual work upon these passages with his classes led him gradually towards it. He first noted a number of striking instances of

parallelism of lines here and there, and thus detected snatches of poetry in several passages. These continued to enlarge from year to year, until he was constrained to ask the question, how much real poetry there was in these ancient stories, and to apply the tests of poetic composition to the entire series. The first passage to disclose itself as poetry was the Elohist narrative of the creation. This proved to be a poem of six strophes, with refrains. The lines are pentameters, measured by five beats of the word accent, with the cæsura dividing the lines into two sections. . . .

"All the characteristic features of Hebrew poetry are clearly manifested in the poem. . . . This led us to examine the Elohist narrative of the flood, and it proved to be a poem of the same essential structure as the Elohist story of the creation.

"We next examined the Jehovistic narrative of the temptation and fall, and found it to be a poem of an entirely different structure from the poems of the Elohist. The lines of this poem are trimeters, and the strophes are regularly composed of fourteen lines each. We then examined the Jehovistic story of the flood, and found that it was a poem of the same structure as the Jehovistic poem of the fall. The stories of Cain and Abel, and the dispersion of the nations from Babel, resolved themselves into the same poetical structure. And thus it has become manifest that the earlier chapters of Genesis are a series of real poems, which have passed through the hands of several editors in the earlier collections of the Elohist and Jehovist, until at last they were compacted by the redactor of the Hexateuch into their present form.

"If it be thought surprising that the poetical structure of these poems has so long been hidden from Hebrew scholars, it is sufficient to mention that Bishop Louth, in the middle of the last century, was the first to discover and to unfold the essential principle of Hebrew poetry, namely, the parallelism of lines, and to show that the prophecies of the book of Isaiah were chiefly poetry. From time to time, during the past century, a large number of poetical extracts have been discovered in the historical books, as well as in the prophetic literature. The great majority of scholars have studied the Old Testament in the interests of dogma, or else of grammatical, historical, or practical exegesis. Very few have studied the literary features of the Old Testa-

ment. The structure of the Hebrew strophe and the measurement of the lines of Hebrew poetry are known to comparatively few Hebrew scholars. . . .

"The poem of the Fall of Man exhibits the several features of Hebrew poetry.

"(1). The lines show all the various features of parallelism that are found in other Hebrew poetry, synonymous, antithetical, and progressive, and the several varieties of these. . . . (See Briggs' *Biblical Study*, p. 264, *seq.*)

"(2). The lines are trimeters, with the exception of a very few broken lines, which are shortened in order to a pause in the thought, in accordance with the frequent usage of all Hebrew poetry of this measurement. The trimeters of Hebrew poetry are composed of three beats of the word accent. The Hebrew poet has the power of combining two or more short words by a makkeph under one word accent. (See Briggs' *Biblical Study*, p. 279, *seq.*)

"(3). The poem has strophical organization. It is composed of ten strophes of fourteen lines each. These are arranged in two groups. The first group is composed of four strophes, arranged on the principle of strophe and anti-strophe. The second is composed of two sets of three strophes each. The second set is balanced against the first set. The ten strophes are equal in the number of the lines. There are fourteen lines to each strophe. These strophes are always divided into two parts, but there is a considerable variety in the inter-relation of these parts. . . .

"(4). There are a considerable number of archaic words which belong to the language of Hebrew poetry." (Extract from article on *The Poem of the Fall of Man*, in the *Reformed Quarterly Review*, April, 1886. See also Briggs' *Messianic Prophecy*, p. 74.)

VII.

THE POEM OF THE CREATION.

"The first chapter of the Bible gives a representation of the creation of the world. This has been studied for ages by all

classes and conditions of men. It has been justly admired for its simplicity, picturesqueness, and sublimity of style. It is a masterpiece of literature as well as of religious conception. In our century it has been the chief battle-ground between science and religion. Theologians have sought in it the mysteries of the origin of the universe, and the order and time of the work of creation. Men of science have sought in it a reflection of the facts that have been discovered in the history of the rocks and the stars. The strife of theologians and scientists has made this chapter—which is one of the most precious gems of Biblical literature—a *crux interpretum*, that is a means of torture to the Biblical scholar who is forced to reconcile the claims of dogma with the claims of science, and yet maintain his integrity as an interpreter of Scripture.

“So far as the questions between science and dogma are concerned, the candid scholar should admit that the contest is undecided. The interpreter of Scripture, who is neither a scientist nor a dogmatist, ought to see in this first chapter of Genesis a magnificent piece of literature, the grandest representation of the most important of all events, the origin of the world and man, which these combatants are doing their best to tear in pieces and patch together in their dogmatic theories and their scientific conjectures. The chief error in the use that is ordinarily made of the first chapter of Genesis is a mistake as to the point of view and scope of the representation, together with a neglect of its literary form. It has been generally held that the author designs to give us the doctrine of the creation of the universe in a simple prose narrative, stating the creations as they occurred day after day in their orderly succession until the whole universe was completed with all its contents in six days. Science has determined the great outlines of the history of the heavens and the earth, in the study of the stars and the rocks and the forces of nature. The problem has been to compare these two representations and see how far there is agreement, and how far there may be difference and disagreement.

“But the author of the first chapter of Genesis does not propose to give us a history of the *creation of the universe out of nothing*. He represents in a few graphic touches the origination of the beautiful organism of our earth and heaven out of a primeval chaos. He does not propose to give us a narrative of the method

of the origination of all things, but to describe the *appearance* of certain great classes of objects in their appointed place in this beautiful organism. He does not give us a prose history or a prose treatise of creation, but he presents us with a *poem of the creation*, a graphic and popular delineation of the genesis of the most excellent organism of our earth and heaven, with their contents; as each order steps forth in obedience to the command of the Almighty Chief; and takes its place in its appointed ranks *in the host of God*. Our Poem of the Creation rises above the strifes of theologians and men of science, and appeals to the æsthetic taste and imagination of the people of God in all lands and in all times.

"The Poem of the Creation has all of the characteristic features of Hebrew poetry. (1). The *feature of parallelism* which Hebrew poetry shares with the Assyrian and ancient Akkadian, is characteristic of our poem in its varied forms of synonym, antithesis, and synthesis. . . .

"(2). The measurement of lines by words or word accents is as even and regular in our poem as in the best specimens of Hebrew poetry. It has five poetic accents with the cæsural-like pause between the three and the two, or the two and the three, which is characteristic of all poems of this number of accents. . . .

"(3). It has a considerable number of archaic words, such as we find elsewhere only in poetry. . . .

"(4). It has strophical organization. It is composed of six strophes or stanzas, which are indicated by the refrain, '*And evening came and morning came*,' varying only in the *number* of the day. These strophes, while they do not have exactly the same number of lines, vary within definite limits, *e. g.*, strophes I. and II. have seven lines each and the refrain; strophes III., IV., and V. have ten lines each and a refrain. The last strophe, the VI., has twenty lines and a refrain—or, in other words, is a strophe with a *double refrain*—such as we find, for example, in the allegory of the vine in the LXXX. Psalm.*

"(5). There are certain catch-words, or secondary refrains, also characteristic of Hebrew poetry, especially in the Song of Songs and Hosea, *e. g.*: (1) *And God said*, which begins each

* See Briggs' *Biblical Study*, p. 277.

item of Creation in its turn. (2) *And it became so.* (3) *And God saw that it was excellent.*

"(6). Our Poem employs poetic license in the use of archaic endings of suffixes and cases to soften the transition from word to word and make the movement more flowing. This is also to be noted in the order of the arrangement of the words in the lines. . . .

"(7). The language and style are simple, graphic, and ornate, such as we find everywhere in poetry, but are regarded as unusual and especially rhetorical in prose.

"(8). There is a simple and beautiful order of thought which harmonizes in the several strophes: God speaks, the creature comes forth in obedience, the Creator expresses his delight in his creature. The Creator then works with the creature and assigns its place and functions. The day's work closes with its evening; and the break of the morning prepares for another day's work. All this gives a monotonous character to the story if it be regarded as prose, but it is in exact correspondence with the characteristic parallelism of Hebrew poetry, which extends not only to the lines of the strophe, but also to the correspondence of strophe with strophe in the greater and grander harmonies of the poem as a whole. These eight characteristics of the first chapter of Genesis are all poetical characteristics, and we make bold to say that there is no piece of poetry in the Bible which can make greater claims than this to be regarded as *Poetry*." (Extract from article on the *Hebrew Poem of the Creation*, in the *Old Testament Student*, April, 1884. See also Briggs' *Messianic Prophecy*, p. 68.)

VIII.

THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL EVIDENCES OF INSPIRATION.

"Another fault of the older apologetic was in laying too much stress upon the external evidence and in neglecting the internal evidence for the inspiration and the canonicity of Scripture. The Roman Catholic Church bases the authority of the Scriptures on the authority of the Church. The Reformers rejected

this external authority and found the evidences for the Scriptures in the Scriptures themselves, in the voice of the living God speaking to the believer in them and through them. As Luther said, "the Church cannot give any more authority or power than it has of itself. A council cannot make that to be of Scripture which is not by nature of Scripture."* The later Reformed and Lutheran scholastics abandoned the position of the Reformers and fell back upon the external evidence of tradition in the synagogue and the church. In this they committed a sad blunder, which greatly injured the evidences for the inspiration and the canonicity of the Bible. Recent criticisms have weakened this line of evidence and given us something much better in its place. They have revived the views of the Reformers and the Puritans and have strengthened the lines of the internal evidences. Here, again, the order of evidence has been changed. We do not first prove canonicity, and then the inspiration of the Scriptures, but the reverse: we first prove the inspiration of the Scriptures, and then the canonicity is a matter of course.

"The traditional evidence also overestimated the external authority of the Bible, in accordance with the familiar saying that the Bible, the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants. This saying is, however, a caricature of the Protestant position. The Protestant religion is the religion of Jesus Christ, as He is revealed to us in the Bible. The Reformers recognized the living God, the risen and reigning Christ, in the Bible; and they regarded the Scriptures as a means of grace to bring Christ to us and to bring us to Christ. The later theology neglected the doctrine of the Scriptures as a means of grace, and laid undue stress on the doctrine of their inspiration. It substituted the authority of the external word of the letter of Scripture, for the internal word of the Master of the Scripture. Recent criticisms have in part overcome this fault. They have pointed out the fault of building our faith on a book, instead of the living God and Saviour. They have called more attention to the God of the Old Testament and the Christ of the New Testament as the very substance, the light and glory of the Bible." (Extract from Briggs' *Whither?* 1889, Charles Scribner's Sons, pp. 280, 281.)

* *Disputatio exc. theolog. Joh. Eccii. et Lutheri hist.*, III., p. 129, *seq.*

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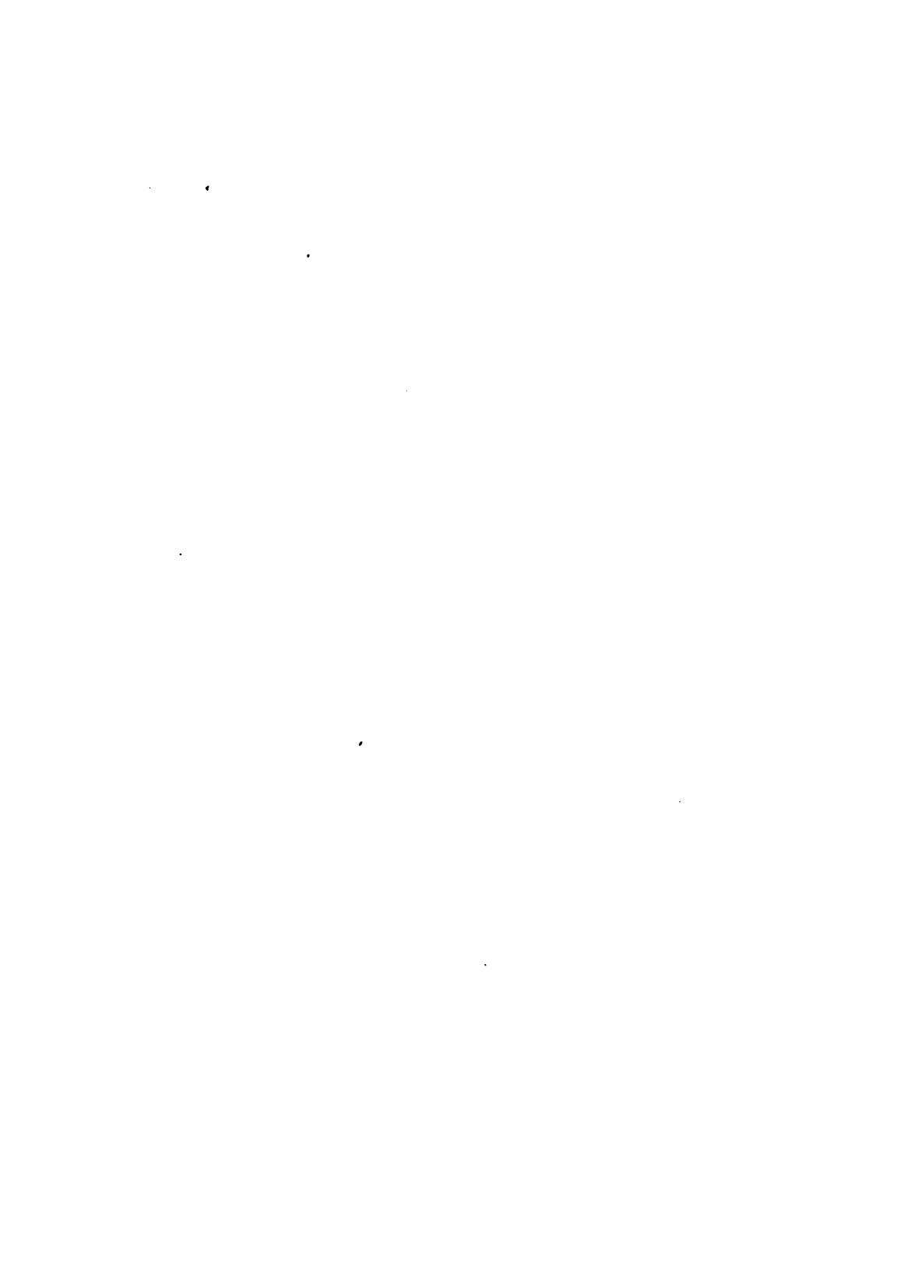
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